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ABSTRACT

Studies of the personality traits of counselors, particularly in relation to their sexuality, assumes that such traits are relevant to counselor effectiveness. To investigate the relationship between counselor effectiveness and sex role attitude, 66 counselor education students, 15 male and 51 female, aged 22-58, participated in individual counseling practicum sessions. To assess sexual orientation the Bem Sex Role Inventory was given to each subject. To assess counselor effectiveness two faculty members independently rated practicum counseling sessions using the Carkhuff Scales for Assessment of Interpersonal Functioning. An analysis of the findings showed no significant difference between sex role classification and grade point average. Further, no significant difference was found between counselor effectiveness and sex role attitudes. However, in a paired comparison, males were more effective counselors than either females or androgynous individuals. Counselor sex, per se, does not appear to relate positively to counselor effectiveness, but rather the masculine personality traits of independence, achievement and self-sufficiency. (BL)

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX ROLE ATTITUDES AND COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

For several decades there has been speculation as to whether effective counselors are feminine, masculine, or androgynous in terms of sex role attitudes.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between sex role attitudes and counselor effectiveness. The 66 subjects were selected from practicum courses in a counselor education program. The Bem Sex Role Inventory was administered and a minimum of two faculty members rated each subject's counseling effectiveness, using the Carkhuff Scales.

Two one-way analyses of the variance were performed, using sex-role classification as the independent variable. For the one-way ANOVA on graduate grade-point-average there was no significant difference. For the ANOVA on counselor effectiveness there was no overall significant difference. However, in a pair-wise comparison, there was a significant difference between the masculine and feminine groups in terms of their effectiveness ratings, with the masculine group obtaining higher mean ratings.

Discussion of findings emphasizes that it is not the sex per se, but the presence of personality traits such as independence, achievement, and self-sufficiency which appear to relate positively to counselor effectiveness.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX ROLE ATTITUDES AND COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between sex role attitudes and counselor effectiveness. The independent variables were scholastic aptitude, as measured by the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), and sex role attitudes, operationally defined as the scores obtained on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), which classifies subjects as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. The dependent variables were graduate grade-point-average (GPA) and counselor effectiveness, defined as the faculty ratings of advanced graduate students, who were matriculated in a counselor education program, in practicum courses only. There were 66 subjects who voluntarily participated in this study, which was conducted at a private, Eastern university.

Related Literature

Studies of the personality characteristics of counselors assume that personality traits and attitudes are relevant to counselor effectiveness (Shertzer and Stone, 1980). Several decades ago, Parson (1954) published an essay entitled, "The Counselor Is A Woman." His contention was that counselor qualities are essentially those that society ascribes to women; including tenderness, gentleness, receptivity, passivity, loving, and concerned more with interpersonal relationships than with things. Subsequently, McClain (1968) administered the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire to 118 high school counselors to determine whether they manifested the femininity (loving receptivity) and the masculinity (potency) that are said to be important to the counseling role. He found that the male counselors differed significantly from male norms in the feminine direction on warmth, tender-mindedness and trust, while female counselors

differed significantly from female norms in the masculine direction on assertiveness, venturesomeness, and practicality.

Carkhuff and Berenson (1969) concur that the effective counselor is both feminine and masculine. The counselor is feminine when that is appropriate, usually for those counselees who have not experienced sufficient quantities of nurturant responsiveness, and the counselor is masculine with those counselees who have not had adequate models for well-directed, action-oriented lives. They postulate that it is most efficacious for the counselor to initiate counseling with nurturant responsiveness, but as the counselee prepares to make discriminations in a given problem area, to introduce the active, assertive, confronting, and directional component of counseling.

Thus, the related literature seems to support the theme of counselor androgyny, which in its broadest sense can be defined as the One which contains the Two, specifically the male (andro) and the female (gyne). Singer (1976) maintains that the message of androgyny is that the human psyche is comprised of many different dualities that must be kept in balance in order for the individual to be whole, to be truly human. Thus, androgyny refers to a specific way of joining the masculine and feminine aspects in a single human being.

The fundamental problem in the present study was to investigate the relationship between counselor effectiveness and sex role attitudes. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between counselor effectiveness and sexual orientation. That is, highly effective counselors would tend to be significantly more androgynous in their sexual orientation than minimally effective counselors, while counselors demonstrating low levels of effectiveness would tend to be more undifferentiated

in their sexual orientation than highly effective counselors.

Subjects and Instruments

The subjects were selected from the counselor education program of a private, Eastern university. All subjects were matriculated students, enrolled in a Master's degree program in counselor education. Subjects had completed successfully at least 24 graduate semester hours in the program.

There are 150 Master's level students enrolled in the counselor education program, including 135 matriculated students and 15 non-matriculated students. The subjects in the study met the following criteria:

——Matriculated students in Master's degree program;

——Completion of a minimum of 24 graduate credits in counselor education with a grade-point-average of 78 or higher;

——Completion of two practicum courses in individual counseling with a grade-point-average of 80 or higher.

There were 68 subjects who met these criteria, and 66 subjects or 97 percent volunteered for the study. There were 15 males (23 percent) and 51 females (77 percent). The age range was from 22 years to 58 years with a mean of 25 years. The distribution of MAT scores and GPA was normal. The mean MAT score was 46.03 with a standard deviation of 15.64. The mean GPA was 85.17, with a standard deviation of 4.92. The correlation between MAT and GPA was 0.11. There is not a significant relationship between the academic ability of subjects, as measured by the MAT, and subsequent academic achievement, as measured by GPA.

A minimum of two faculty members, who had supervised a subject during an individual counseling practicum with live clients who were audiotaped and/or videotaped, rated each subject's counseling effective-

ness on a three-point scale (1 = high; 3 = low). The effectiveness ratings were derived from a composite of individual ratings for each subject, using the "Scales for Assessment of Interpersonal Functioning" (Carkhuff, 1969). The assessment scales used included those assessing relationship skills (empathy, respect, genuineness) and those assessing counselor action skills (self-disclosure, concreteness, confrontation, immediacy). The Carkhuff Scales assess five levels of functioning; from low (1) to high (5). The mean ratings on the Carkhuff Scales were translated into global ratings as follows:

| | Carkhuff Mean Ratings | | Global Mean Ratings |
|---|---|---|---|
| (Low) | Levels 1 - 2.50 | —— | 3 |
| (Moderate) | Levels 2.51 - 3.75 | —— | 2 |
| (High) | Levels 3.76 - 5.00 | —— | 1 |

A total of five faculty members participated in the evaluation process. If there was disagreement in rating between the two raters, a third faculty member evaluated two randomly selected audiotaped and/or videotaped sessions and met with the two raters to reach concensus. Among the 66 subject ratings, there were only four or six percent of the original evaluations that were disparate. A summary of the counselor effectiveness ratings of the 66 subjects is presented in Table 1. Therefore, the mean faculty rating for counselor effectiveness was 1.97 or slightly "above average effectiveness."

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (1976) was administered to all subjects. The inventory consists of 20 sterotypically masculine traits and 20 sterotypically feminine traits, and subjects were instructed to indicate the extent to which each of these traits was self-descriptive. The Sex Role Inventory utilizes median splits for classification of subjects

into four categories as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Feminine: | Subjects who score high feminine, low masculine |
| 2. | Masculine: | Subjects who score high masculine, low feminine |
| 3. | Androgynous: | Subjects who score high masculine, high feminine |
| 4. | Undifferentiated: | Subjects who score low masculine, low feminine |

Test-retest reliability indicated that all four scores were highly reliable over a four-week interval (masculinity r-.90; femininity r-.90; androgyny r-.93; undifferentiated r-.89) (Bem, 1974). In concurrent validity studies, Wilson (1979) found the BSRI to have the highest degree of homogeneity of items, BSRI - F .89. Validation procedures for the BSRI are still under investigation (Worell, 1978). Table 2 illustrates the sex role attitudes of subjects by gender and counselor effectiveness in percent.

The five counselor educators were administered the BSRI. The scoring was based on the trainee group medians and indicated the following: feminine—one or 20 percent; masculine—two or 40 percent; androgynous—two or 40 percent. Due to the small number of counselor educator raters, these data were not used in the study.

Normative data on the BSRI differs between the 66 counselor trainees in this study and a college undergraduate population (n-917) cited in the BSRI manual (1976). For the 66 counselor trainees, the median masculinity score is 5.12; the median femininity score is 5.19. For the 917 undergraduate students at Stanford University, the median masculinity score is 4.89; the median femininity score is 4.76. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of sex role orientation using the different medians. Com-

pared to the undergraduate population, using the medians normed on this group, 79 percent of the counselor trainees would be classified as feminine or androgynous; 48 percent of the undergraduates were so classified. The difference in proportion observed is significant at the a = .001 level. We conclude that the sample of counselor trainees is significantly more feminine and androgynous than the norming undergraduate population.

Results

Two one-way analyses of the variance were performed to test the hypothesis. The independent variable was the sex-role classification according to the BSRI sex role inventories; including group 1-feminine, (N=13), group 2-masculine (N=17), group 3-androgynous (N=18), group 4-undifferentiated (N=18).

The dependent variables were the graduate GPA, and counselor rating of counseling effectiveness. For the one-way ANOVA on the graduate GPA there was no significant difference. (Table 4; F≤.78, P≤.51). For the test on counselor rating of effectiveness there was no overall significant difference (Table 4; F≤1.43; P≤.24). However, in a pair-wise comparison, there was a significant difference between the feminine and the masculine groups in terms of their effectiveness ratings. Overall, the feminine group had a lower rating; mean = 2.23. The masculine group had a higher mean rating; mean = 1.76, with androgynous and undifferentiated groups rated as lower than the masculine group. The feminine-masculine groups were significantly different from each other at the P≤.04 level.

Discussion

The hypothesized relationship between counselor effectiveness and sex role attitudes in general has not been demonstrated by this investi-

gation. Contrary to expectation, the masculine sex role attitude, as contrasted with the feminine sex role attitude, appears positively related to counselor effectiveness. More trainees identified as masculine in sex role attitude are rated as highly effective counselors than those trainees identified as feminine. This finding supports previous studies concerning successful academic achievers in general; i.e., high achievement motivation leads to superior performance and males are socialized to high achievement motivation (O'Neil, 1981). It is not the sex of the achiever per se, but the presence of those personality traits traditionally associated with a particular sex which appear to account for the finding. Practicum students who view themselves as independent, self-sufficient, analytical, competitive and ambitious, are more likely to be rated as effective counselors by their supervisors than those who view themselves as tender, yielding, likable, moody, and unpredictable.

The limitation of this study is the use of trainees rather than experienced counselors to examine the hypotheses. Just as this group of graduate students was significantly more feminine and androgynous than a population of undergraduate students in nonspecific majors, so too experienced counselors may differ from trainees in the way they view themselves.

In summary, there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that high counseling effectiveness is positively related to sex role attitudes in general, but there is evidence that high counseling effectiveness in a program in graduate school is positively related to the masculine sex role attitude. This sample of counselor trainees is significantly more feminine and androgynous than a population of undergraduates whose college major has not been specified.

This study measured counselor effectiveness by focusing on the process factors in counselor-counselee interaction. It is recommended that the study be replicated, using other measures of counselor effectiveness; such as counselee changes in the self-enhancing direction, less defensive behavior, increased ego strength, or goal attainment. Additionally, other measures of sex role attitudes might be employed, both with counselor trainees and professional counselors. The feminine descriptors used by Parson (1954) differ from those used by Bem (1976). Parson's descriptors of gentleness, tenderness, loving are incorporated in the BSRI, as well as moody, unpredictable, jealous, unsystematic—more negative descriptors.

During a period when counselor educators are attempting to identify criteria related to counselor effectiveness, the "truth-in-testing" laws have made it increasingly difficult to employ aptitude tests as criteria for graduate admissions. This study showed a very low correlation between MAT scores and GPA (0.11). It seems imperative that counselor educators continue to search for personality traits and attitudes that are related to counselor effectiveness.

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Table 1

Faculty Ratings of Subjects' Counseling Effectiveness

| Rating | No. of Subjects | % of Subjects |
|---|---|---|
| High Effectiveness (1) | 15 | 22 |
| Average Effectiveness (2) | 40 | 61 |
| Low Effectiveness (3) | 11 | 17 |
| Total | 66 | 100 |

Table 2

Sex Role Attitudes of Subjects in Percent and Counselor Effectiveness

| | Sex Role Attitudes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Counselor Effectiveness | Male | Female | Androgynous | Undifferentiated | Total |
| High Effectiveness | 53.3 | 25.0 | 16.7 | 20.0 | 27.0 |
| Average Effectiveness | 33.3 | 50.0 | 75.0 | 66.7 | 58.0 |
| Low Effectiveness | 13.3 | 25.0 | 8.3 | 13.3 | 15.0 |

Table 3

Bem Sex Role Inventory Classification
Using Different Normative Data

| Sex Role Orientation | Counselor Trainee Medians | Bern College Undergraduate Medians |
|---|---|---|
| Masculine | 17 | 8 |
| Feminine | 13 | 20 |
| Androgynous | 18 | 32 |
| Undifferentiated | 18 | 6 |
| Total | 66 | 66 |

Table 4

BEM Sex Role Attitude Scales
For Masculine and Feminine for the
Independent Variables

| | Masculine | | Feminine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\bar{x}$ | sd | $\bar{x}$ | sd |
| Feminine | -4.49 | .24 | 5.55 | .23 |
| Masculine | 5.47 | .45 | -4.85 | .26 |
| Androgynous | 5.61 | .33 | 5.60 | .35 |
| Undifferentiated | -4.53 | .37 | -4.74 | .32 |

Table 5

Results of the Analysis of Variance for Graduate GPA and Ratings of Counseling Effectiveness when Controlled for Sex Role Attitudes Measured by the BEM

| Independent Variable | Graduate GPA $\bar{x}$ | Counseling Effectiveness $\bar{x}$ |
|---|---|---|
| Feminine N=13 | 83.31 | 2.23 |
| Masculine N=17 | 85.39 | 1.76 |
| Androgynous N=18 | 85.80 | 1.94 |
| Undifferentiated N=18 | 85.69 | 1.94 |
| | $F = .78$, $p \leq .51$ | $F = 1.43$, $p \leq .24$ |